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ABSTRACT

This document presents recommendations of the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) regarding the development of a future agenda for a unified (regular and special) educational system. Ten recommendations--five addressing policy and five addressing actions--are included, with a discussion of rationale and implications of each. The recommendations are presented as a series of principles, as follows: (1) all stakeholders are responsible for the education of all students in a community; (2) a unified system of education must prevail to ensure quality, inclusive education for all students; (3) accountability for all students is guaranteed through a system of unified outcomes; (4) all educators are prepared to educate all students; (5) funding systems emphasize shared resources; (6) site-based management is the means for building a community of learners responsible for one another; (7) a curriculum framework for a unified system is the means to dialogue about outcomes for planning and organizing schools into learning communities; (8) staff development in a restructured workplace fosters ad hoc problem solving, shared resources, and continuous improvement; (9) all students and their families have access to integrated community services at or near the school site; and (10) all students and staff have access to and training in appropriate technology that supports collaborative decision making. (Contains 17 references.) (DB)

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CASE Future Agenda for Special Education: Creating a Unified Education System

"Together, we have cleared early hurdles and tackled the first mountain ridge. . .we have emerged at the first crest, only to view with some foreboding the endless series of peaks yet to be scaled."

Margaret Lipp

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Table of Contents

The Process of Building a Future Agenda		pg. 1
The Future Agenda for Special Education		pg. 2
Introduction		pg. 3
Thinking About Inclusive School Change		pg. 4
1	Stakeholder Responsibility in A Community	pg. 6
2	Develop A Clear Vision & Mission for Education that Includes All Students	pg. 8
3	Establish A System of Accountability for All Educational Programs	pg. 12
4	Personnel Preparation & Certification	pg. 15
5	Funding	pg. 18
6	Create An Organization that Supports the Mission of Restructuring	pg. 20
7	Change What Schools Teach & How They Teach It	pg. 22
8	Create Supports for Staff Development & Staff Renewal	pg. 25
9	Integrated Community Services for Students with Disabilities & Families	pg. 27
10	Educational Technology	pg. 29
Summary		pg. 32
References		pg. 34
Order Information		pg. 35

The Process of Building a Future Agenda

The CASE Executive Committee wishes to acknowledge the participation of many groups and individuals in the formulation of its Future Agenda statement. CASE Past Presidents Gerry Reynaud and Ken Bird worked extensively to build consensus with the Board of Directors who are state and Canadian subdivision representatives. As a result, in October 1991, the Executive Committee, authorized the development of a process to lead to the establishment of a Future Agenda for Special Education. The CASE Research and Special Projects Committee was commissioned to debate the parameters of a Future Agenda and bring forward a set of policy options to the Board of Directors for its discussion and review.

In conjunction with the work of Margaret McLaughlin and Sandra Warren of the University of Maryland Policy Center, as well as the National Academy on the Principalship in Special Education at Indiana University, the CASE Research Committee accepted the charge and produced a draft statement and local school discussion process. The local school district discussion process was piloted and tested by the CASE Research Committee at Indiana University in the summer of 1992.

At the annual fall meeting of the Board of Directors in October 1992, the CASE leadership discussed a set of ten policy issues. From those discussions, five policy and five action recommendations were drafted for Executive Committee review in February 1993. At that meeting final recommendations were discussed, edited, and organized into a final draft.

In April 1993, at the San Antonio convention of the Council for Exceptional Children, the Executive Committee announced its Agenda for a Unified Education System and opened dialogue on its content. The Executive Committee welcomes further comment and discussion. Please direct your comments to President Jack Freehill or Executive Director Jo Thomason at the International CASE headquarters: 615 16th Street NW, Albuquerque, NM 87104, (505) 243-7622.

The CASE Future Agenda for Special Education: Creating a Unified Education System

The CASE Executive Board recommends the following policies and actions to direct the future of special education:

Policies

1. All stakeholders are responsible for the education of all students in a community.

2. A unified system of education must prevail to ensure quality, inclusive education for all students.

3. Accountability for all students is guaranteed through a system of unified outcomes.

4. All educators are prepared to educate all students.

5. Funding systems that support a unified system emphasize shared resources for all students without label, penalty or prejudice.

Actions

6. Site-based management is the means for building a community of learners responsible for one another.

7. A curriculum framework for a unified system is the means to dialogue about outcomes for planning and organizing schools into learning communities.

8. Staff development in a restructured workplace fosters ad hoc problem solving, shared resources and continuous improvement.

9. All students and their families have access to integrated community services at or near the school site.

10. All students and staff have access to and training in appropriate technology that supports collaborative decision making.

Introduction

The Council of Administrators of Special Education has drafted an Agenda for a Unified System of Education in light of the debate on the restructuring of schools. In response to the literature on school restructuring, special education reform, and its own experience in the delivery of services to students with disabilities, the Council through its state and provincial level leadership has developed a set of policy and school level practice recommendations.

Though the original intent of this process was to devleop an agenda for the future of special education, it soon became clear that the dual system of special and regular education must merge to become a unified system of education for all students. Thus, the focus of this process has shifted to creating a future agenda for a unified educational system.

The CASE Executive Committee urges its membership to engage in local debate on school restructuring. The Committee believes this document will assist local leadership in developing a vision of effective schools for all students, especially those with diverse learning needs. The policy recommendations will require a review of the local district vision and mission to determine the inclusiveness of students with disabilities. It will also require an analysis of student outcomes and the corresponding accountability systems to determine if students with disabilities are recognized and included. The action recommendations will require entering into a new set of negotiations with individual school faculties, principals and each local school community to examine how valued student outcomes are being met through a curriculum for all students.

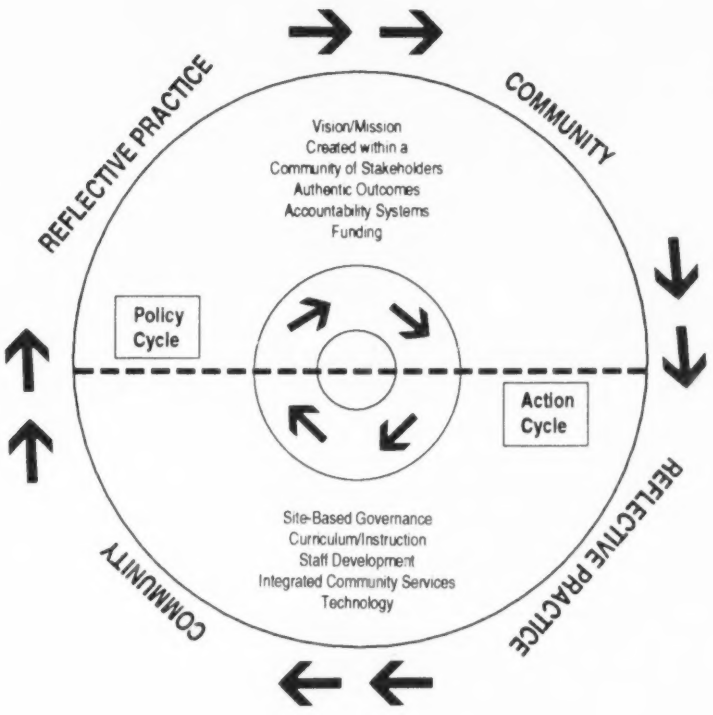
The CASE Executive Committee intends to use this document in its own deliberations with other stakeholder groups at the national, provincial and state levels to influence the direction of services for students with disabilities. This agenda is also designed to assist regular and special education practitioners as restructuring efforts continue in individual school districts throughout the United States and Canada.

Thinking About Inclusive School Change

It is the contention of the Executive Committee that the policy and action recommendations within the changing context of school restructuring require attending to the professional bureaucracy of schools. Reinventing schools requires changing the policy and action frameworks in which the community of stakeholders, board members, administrators, teachers, and the those with disabilities work. The community of stakeholders first needs to define the mission of schools through a vision of the future. Those same stakeholders are also required to set the authentic outcomes that students should acquire and demonstrate prior to graduation. According to Newman (1992) from the University of Wisconsin Center on Restructuring, ". . . authentic student achievement of valued outcomes emphasizes using the mind to produce discourse, materials, objects, and performance that have personal, aesthetic and utilitarian value" (p. 8). Stakeholders also need to agree on accountability systems that assure student performance regarding valued outcomes. Finally, a finance policy must be developed that allows stakeholders to monitor allocation and expenditure of funds for programs for students with disabilities.

Building public school policy with community input requires constant reflection on options and approval of specific deviations from current policy. The primary function of policymakers is to review data on school plans and performance with all stakeholders to reflect on their policy as it is being implemented. From their review, they should steer the school district toward its defined mission, leaving the operation of the schools to those community members and staff who provide educational services (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992) (See The Policy Cycle in Figure 1).

Figure 1:
Policy and Action Cycles: Centrally Driven Policy and Locally Driven Actions Within a Community of Stakeholders



The sense of community should also guide the school level participation of community members in individual school governance. The first order of school governance is to build an inclusive school learning community based upon the school's defined purpose. The design and development of curricula leading to state and district valued outcomes should follow close behind. Preparing staff to work collaboratively and to share their expertise is the fundamental purpose of an on-going staff development program. A larger investment in technology to support individual and group decision-making is a key responsibility for sub-teams of staff. Technology serves as a major communication device to connect the school to the community and instruction to outcomes. Technology also serves to support staff reflection on practice. Time for reflection on practice needs to be built into the structure of the school and the school day to prepare and benefit from teams of teachers functioning as planners, instructors and evaluators of programs leading to valued outcomes (See Action Cycle in Figure 1).

Issue 1

Stakeholder Responsibility in a Community

Policy Recommendation

All Stakeholders Are Responsible for the Education of All Students in a Community

Rationale

As communities grow, their make-up becomes more diverse. Inclusive communities accept and nurture this diversity, which adds richness and fullness to their makeup. This diversity also adds challenges to communities to learn to live with differences in an ever-changing world. Just as schools are realizing the importance of collaboration and cooperation in the education of their diverse populations, so must communities in which the schools exist adopt similar attitudes and behaviors. Community support and involvement in the education of youth is essential for continuation of the culture as well as for improvement in the community's quality of life. All community members have a stake in the education of a child and must realize the responsibility which accompanies this role. A communal agenda which advocates principles of life-long learning and supporting the common good are critical. In an age of homelessness, teen-age pregnancy, drug abuse, and physical violence, today's youth struggle with survival. Schools attempt to provide an education that will help students cope with their daily lives and prepare for a better future.

Schools can prepare students in better ways when this endeavor becomes a shared responsibility with the community. From pre-school to adult

life, all students are preparing to assume their roles in the larger community. All community members are stakeholders and potential team members in the planning and implementing of the education of its younger members.

In many ways, special education has been a leader in establishing community partnerships and developing community resources. Job sites have been developed, community agencies have provided assistance, and community based education programs have flourished. These same relationships must be expanded to include all aspects of the community and all students. From the individual taxpayer to private business to churches to government institutions, all must support and take an active, cooperative role in providing an education for all students. Job training, housing, supported employment, mentoring and volunteering are all important services which the community can provide. As for the students, all have the right to contribute to, access, participate in and benefit from the broader community. All people, regardless of age, race, gender, ethnicity or disability have a niche in the life of a community. All must participate in this community and be considered when decisions regarding education are made.

Implications

All community members must participate and contribute to the education of all students. Parents and other community members must be viewed as partners in education and their input must be valued and encouraged. All community members become stakeholders and may be called upon to be a part of an educational team. Parents, particularly, begin to play a more active role in the actual implementation of a student's educational plan. They focus their attention on communicating with and assisting school personnel as much as possible. Training for stakeholders in the process and in their roles as team members must be provided. Strategic planning assists in bringing school, community and business into focus on educational outcomes. The emphasis on due process diminishes while collaboration and cooperation becomes the norm. All stakeholders must focus on the needs of students and not their individual agendas. The student must become the common agenda.

Issue 2

Develop a Clear Vision and Mission for Education that Includes All Students

Policy Recommendation

A Unified System of Education Must Prevail to Ensure Quality Inclusive Education For All Students

Rationale

One of the basic rights of all individuals in a democratic society is the right to participate. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and subsequent legislation ensured this right of participation for all citizens of the United States regardless of race, creed, color or religion. A series of federal laws, beginning in 1966 and culminating with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and ultimately with Public Law 94-142 in 1975 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, extended to people with disabilities the right of full and equal participation in all democratic institutions, including public education. Similar federal and provincial legislation in Canada generally supports the expectations of these American legislative initiatives. According to Gartner and Lipsky (1987) ". . . special education programs of the past decade have established these students' rights to education; [however], these programs have failed both to overcome the separation between general and special education and to make the separate system significant in terms of student benefits" (p. 372).

A dual system of education has evolved that separates educational programs for disabled and non-disabled individuals. Governance structures are separate; funding mechanisms are separate; and programs are often provided in settings other than the regular classroom, using limited outcomes distinct from the core curriculum outcomes. Students are often categorized, identified, and then segregated from their peers. Teachers hold different certifications which are valid only for serving particular populations of students.

Most of the educational research suggests a lack of efficacy in a separate system. If segregation does not assist students in better meeting their educational outcomes, then why promote such a system? A unified system would allow all students to receive the necessary educational services which they require without being labeled and without being removed from the classroom environment. By endorsing this unified system, the need to overcome the separation between general and special education is recognized by creating one system which supports the educational needs of all students.

> A unified educational system is based on the principle that each student represents a unique combination of abilities and educational needs and may require individual assistance at varying times during the school years in order to achieve important outcomes. The key belief is that schools are organized around services, not programs. In a unified educational system, human and other resources are employed to provide a range of services in a range of settings to students with unequal educational needs. 'Full Service' or 'community schools' can be created to bring together multiple service agencies, such as health and mental health, social services, and, when necessary, juvenile justice to meet the needs of all students. Central to this option is the assurance that there is accountability for all students, including those with disabilities, and assurance that students with disabilities are being appropriately and effectively educated. (McLaughlin & Warren, 1992, p. 30)

Implications

For a unified system to be successful, all educators must believe that *all* students can learn and that they, as educators, are capable of teaching *all* students. As a result, the lines between and within regular education, special education, Chapter I, bi-lingual education, gifted, at-risk, etc. become blurred and eventually eliminated. All programs can come together to form a new educational system. The system operates within individual schools continuously organized around ad hoc teams supporting students in need (See Skrtic, 1991b). As unified systems emerge, there is a tremendous need for staff development and preservice, not only for school personnel but for boards of education, supervisors, state department staff, parents, and other community members.

A unified system continues to assure that the needs of students are met without loss of funding or service. The system responds more effectively to the needs of all students. Support and service are provided at the point and time of need. Lengthy evaluation periods which must occur before a student can receive services can be eliminated. Due process rights continue to be ensured, though procedural safeguards may no longer be necessary.

Curricular options which in the past have only been available to special education students can be available to all students. Life skills may be offered to all students. The community becomes a resource for all students. Transitional services become available to any student who may need them. Services of varying scope and intensity are provided for all students, and these services may be delivered in a classroom or in the community.

The most important implication is for students. No longer are students with special needs relegated to the status of second class citizens. *All* students share a common environment and *all* belong. Students learn through everyday experience to accept and hopefully value differences in others. The sooner students become immersed in this type of system, the quicker problems of a dual system will be eliminated.

Flexible instructional grouping, not tracking, is necessary to meet the unique outcomes of all students. Adequate technical assistance must be available to teachers in heterogeneous learning environments. System and school leadership must give visible support and modeling so that staff will be willing to take risks. Staff development and on-going training are essential. Higher education programs, practices, training and initiatives need to reflect the transformation in public schools from a dual to a unified system and devote their programs to developing teachers who are able and willing to work with students who have a variety of talents and needs.

A few additional implications are worth noting. All stakeholders in the community must be included in planning and implementing programs in a unified system. Funding and regulatory issues must be examined at the local, state and federal level with significant adaptations resulting. Also, a new accountability system must be developed which will ensure that the special needs of all children are being met. These implications, though far-reaching, are by no means barriers to the adoption of a unified system of education. Current paradigms of practice and attitudes are the most significant barriers to change.

Issue 3

Establish a System of Accountability for All Educational Programs

Policy Recommendation

Accountability for All Students is Guaranteed Through a System of Unified Outcomes

Rationale

Within most school districts today, there is little consensus regarding what schools should be evaluating and what evaluation process should be used. Assessment plans in schools are often nebulous and usually directed by state mandates. There are no clear-cut answers to the questions about who should be evaluated, whether modifications should be made to accommodate special needs, or what exactly the assessment instrument is actually measuring. While parents and other community members are becoming more cognizant of standardized test scores nationwide, schools are being pressured to establish an accountability system which will tell parents exactly what their children are learning. This policy requires the formulation of a broad based set of outcomes which is applicable to *all* students without exception. "Implicit in this option is the belief that there is a common domain of student outcomes that *all* students should be expected to achieve" (McLaughlin & Warren, 1992, p. 44). This does not imply that all students are expected to learn exactly what others are learning. It does imply, however, that there are certain general expectations which all students are required to work toward even though the demonstration mode for these outcomes may vary. For example, being able to communicate may be an outcome for all students. Some students may demonstrate mastery of that outcome by writing a detailed persuasive proposal while others may

effectively use an assistive communication device to independently communicate needs and opinions. Multiple performance measures must be defined to assess each of the outcomes. This policy

> . . . recognizes that performance outcomes or indicators, as well as assessment strategies, need to reflect the diversity of the educational goals of students who receive special education services. These include outcomes such as personal autonomy or independence, which can be operationalized into more specific and measurable attainments during school. (McLaughlin and Warren, 1992, p.44)

Adopting a unified outcomes approach requires a change in accountability procedures. Currently accountability systems in special education are based upon inputs. Within a unified system, accountability is based on student progress toward outcomes, not on absolute standards of performance. The purpose of accountability systems is to monitor and adjust programs and services to better meet student outcomes. It is a continuous, on-going process which ensures that students are doing what they should be doing. Accountability systems should be used to determine how an individual school is doing its job, in light of the progress being made toward student outcomes. "No school should be penalized for students with lower baseline achievement; penalities exist only for no student progress" (McLaughlin and Warren, 1992, p. 45).

In a unified system, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) becomes the vehicle by which outcomes are selected and demonstrative indicators are identified and measured. A team of stakeholders becomes responsible for developing, planning and implementing the IEP. The plan becomes team driven, operated, and controlled. Individual outcomes are tied to unified outcomes. Teachers and related service personnel provide feedback to students on their performance, and services are adjusted accordingly. School accountability is based on an individual student's progress toward outcomes and not on the number of services provided or the procedures used.

Implications

In a unified system, schools must be particularly aware of those with moderate to severe disabilities to be sure their needs are reflected in the unified outcomes of the district. For those with more severe disabilities, fewer outcomes are selected, and demonstration in multiple settings is required. The term "broad based outcomes" needs to be clearly defined, not only for students and teachers, but for parents and other stakeholders. Questions such as "What are the outcomes for all students?" and "How do we want this particular student to be able to demonstrate mastery of outcomes?" are asked for all students. The answers to these questions generate curricular goals as well as the instructional strategies for each child.

Adopting a unified outcomes and accountability system provides schools with a means to assess the effectiveness of the entire school program for all students. (See Champlin, 1991; Spady, 1991; Marshall and Spady, 1991). This system drives curriculum and provides ways to ensure that all students are progressing toward a common core of knowledge, skills, attitudes, wisdom and character. Instruments and procedures must be identified which would appropriately assess outcomes for all students. "Authentic assessments (e.g., portfolios and performance demonstrations) can include a greater diversity of students" (McLaughlin and Warren, 1992, p. 45).

A unified system continues to include the use of IEPs to measure student success. However, the IEP becomes outcome driven and not service driven. The IEP becomes a vehicle for communication and accountability and could apply to all students.

Clearly, an increased investment in technology that is accessible and networked is needed. The technology is needed to assist staff and parents in their continued efforts to store feedback on student performance, adjust plans, and share results individually and in an aggregate form based upon the outcomes that becomes the core outcome data base.

Personnel Preparation and Certification

Issue 4

Policy Recommendation

All Educators Are Prepared to Educate All Students

Rationale

Institutions of higher education and state departments of education are re-examining preparation and certification requirements in terms of their capacity to help all graduates understand their roles as educators today. The special education movement toward meeting the needs of students with disabilities in classrooms with their peers demands that all educators be prepared to work with *all* children. Educators are entering restructured environments where they are required to work in collaborative, consultative or team teaching situations. All educators need to be prepared to work in these new restructured environments.

Special and regular education preparation programs are currently separate entities in most universities and have not addressed the restructuring efforts and movements toward inclusion that are taking place in many of the public schools. Schools are becoming places where people work in teams, and they can no longer be viewed as buildings with isolated classrooms. They have become or are becoming collaborative learning environments that serve heterogeneous groups of youngsters in a variety of ways. Schools require teachers to understand individual differences and learning styles and assume they are able to use a variety of teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students. Teacher preparation programs and state certification departments can no longer ignore the changes that are occurring in schools today. By adopting this policy at the state level, these changes will occur.

Implications

Higher education must re-examine its delivery system in schools of education and must restructure to model best practices. Pre-service programs must be restructured to include instruction in dealing with diversity, classroom management, principles of effective teaching, authentic assessment, peer coaching, working with parents, etc. Pre-service programs should include apprentice programs and/or mentoring options in integrated settings. Higher education must expand programs to provide an adequate supply of qualified professionals to provide related services including speech and language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, school psychologists, social workers, orientation and mobility trainers and other related service professionals. Collaboration and cooperation between departments must occur. It is critical for institutions of higher education to re-examine the course of study and the delivery systems which lead to a teaching degree. Institutions of higher education can best teach new approaches by modeling collaboration and cooperation between departments, by developing thematic units, and by integrating their own curriculum.

> State boards can provide incentives... for institutions of higher education to take a lead role in merging their departments of special and general education... State boards can also serve as conveners of higher education, elementary and secondary education, parents and community members to help teacher trainers understand what they need to teach future teachers. Furthermore, state boards can provide incentives for teacher training programs to experiment with various merged program models. One way this can be done is to provide waivers, as requested, to create a more inclusive training system. Another incentive is to award mini-grants to create joint research agendas between special and general educators. (Winners All: A Call for Inclusive Schools, 1992, p. 26)

Certification offices must also re-evaluate the current certification requirements and make changes which reflect the necessity of all educators to be certified to teach all students. State departments of education must begin reforming the certification system as it presently exists. Currently educators receive certification as a particular type of teacher or administrator. Teachers are certified in particular fields such as elementary education, special education, science, physical education, gifted education, etc. Building administrators are certified as high school principals, elementary principals, etc. Teachers who are certified in one area may not be certified in another area and therefore cannot by

law teach all students. Administrators of elementary buildings cannot, by law, be building leaders in high schools, unless they hold certificates for both levels. Specific attention in principal preparation regarding students with disabilities needs emphasis in discussion of principal certification. State department and local districts must provide extensive school in-service preparation for principals. All educators must first, and foremost, be certified to educate all students. A general teaching certificate could be awarded after meeting general teaching requirements. Specialist certificates should be offered at the graduate level for those professionals seeking specific disciplinary study in areas such as, systems consultation, deaf education, etc. Some attention should also be paid to the preparation, induction and socialization of instructional assistants to prepare them as partners in the teaching and learning process.

Issue 5

Funding

Policy Recommendation

Funding Systems that Support a Unified System Emphasize Shared Resources for All Students Without Label, Penalty or Prejudice

Rationale

The current system for funding regular education programs is different from the funding system for special education. It is problematic for a unified system when funding does not fiscally encourage collaborative use and discretion. The special education funding system is particularly complicated with multiple sources and countless reporting requirements. The special education funds are distributed based on the number of children identified as having a particular disability, the amount of services provided, or the nature of the placement recommendation. In order to receive these funds, a school district must categorize their students under one of several disabling conditions. If a school district wishes to move toward a unified system, many fear the loss of these funds.

> Unless formulae are revised or waived, funds for special education will be lost as a result of the decrease of special education child counts due to non-identification. Funding from other sources, such as Medicare, that require a differential diagnosis may be lost unless alternative procedures for determining eligibility are used. (McLaughlin & Warren, 1992, p. 33)

If necessary, funding at the state, provincial and federal levels must be changed to allow schools to move toward a more inclusive educational system without losing this valuable revenue.

One way of revising the funding system is to:

> Centralize categorical program accounts (e.g., Chapter 1, Special Education, Educational Impact and, ESOL, Migrant Education, etc.). . . to allow the central office to administer funds to ensure fiscal compliance but allow flexible use of funds at the building level in order to foster collaboration and joint planning. Another revision may be to . . . base funding on the total school population or on services provided, not on the numbers or types of students identified as having disabilities within a school. (McLaughlin and Warren, 1992, p.31)

The State of Vermont has implemented a new funding formula which allows for a unified system of education without losing valuable resources. For example, block grants are awarded to each district to help cover the costs of basic special education services. The amount a district receives for the block grant depends on the number of students who in the past have received special education services in that district. It is also based on the previous year and the state average salaries for mainstream special educators.

Other states are considering new funding formulas which allow unified systems to emerge without losing valuable revenue. Another approach may be to look at the funding plans developed at both state/province and local levels and develop a composite of positive features of these plans for consideration.

Implications

A funding system which allows for a unified system requires drastic revision in the way most state departments are currently allocating funds. Funding formulas must be developed that do not penalize growing districts, that support flexible staffing, and that do not reduce the total amount of funds available to meet specialized needs. A system of accountability must be developed, and a monitoring system must be in place. If a funding formula that promotes a unified system is adopted at the state level, many schools can have new opportunities to provide educational services to all students without the cumbersome evaluation and identification process which currently exists. Students are not identified as "disabled" before receiving special services. All students can be viewed as unique with special talents and needs and those needs, can be met in a variety of ways.

Issue 6

Create an Organization that Supports the Mission of Restructuring

Action Recommendation

Site-Based Management is the Means For Building a Community of Learners Responsible for One Another

Rationale

> Decentralizing school management has emerged as the cornerstone of school restructuring. It is based on the premise that educational decisions are best made at the building level, that teachers, parents, and principals should be freed from outside interference to educate students according to their best judgment . . . . The concept of site-based management (SBM) is integral to the concept of promoting local control and innovation and increasing involvement of parents and other community members . . . . allowing individual schools to have authority for budget, personnel, and program decisions for all students with disabilities promotes inclusion of those students into the local school site and requires responsibility and accountability for students with disabilities. (McLaughlin & Warren, 1992, pp. 49, 15, & 54)

Site-based management recognizes that better and more effective management results when those who are closest to the schools have both the responsibility and authority to make decisions. Allowing the staff and community to have input into decisions for the local school promotes inclusion and fosters ownership and responsibility for educating all students.

Implications

A major consideration or implication of this action is the need for all educators to share in the responsibility for services provided for all students, including students with special needs. Special educators' roles may change to facilitators, advisors, and occasionally, advocates or monitors. Principals in individual buildings oversee all aspects of the curriculum, including the plans for children with disabilities. Long range strategic plans must be developed district wide, which will outline the new roles of all personnel. Collaboration among all stakeholders is crucial if this planning process is to be successful. Site-based planning teams may be organized and should reflect the diversity of the school and community. Procedures regarding accessing special services for students who need them must be in place. Also, procedures for managing funding allocations for students with disabilities need to be clearly established through building based plans. All stakeholders need to understand the art of collaboration and shared decision making and must learn to work together for the good of the students and the school.

This policy requires greater parental and community involvement in school level decision making. A climate open to community as well as staff input and team decision making is crucial. Ultimately the responsibility for *all* students in a particular building rests in the hands of the building principal and staff which assists in further blending of the special and regular education systems. "Extensive use of waivers from district or state policies may be required to allow schools to make program changes" (McLaughlin and Warren, 1992, p. 57). Clear waiver policies must be established, and after some review of practice, new policies should be written. Policies inconsistent with, or those that tend to discourage inclusion, need to be abolished or revised. Policies, for example, regarding suspension and expulsion need careful monitoring and ongoing evaluation.

Issue 7

Change What Schools Teach
and How They Teach It

Action Recommendation

A Curriculum Framework for a Unified System is the Means to Dialogue about Outcomes for Planning and Organizing Schools into Learning Communities

Rationale

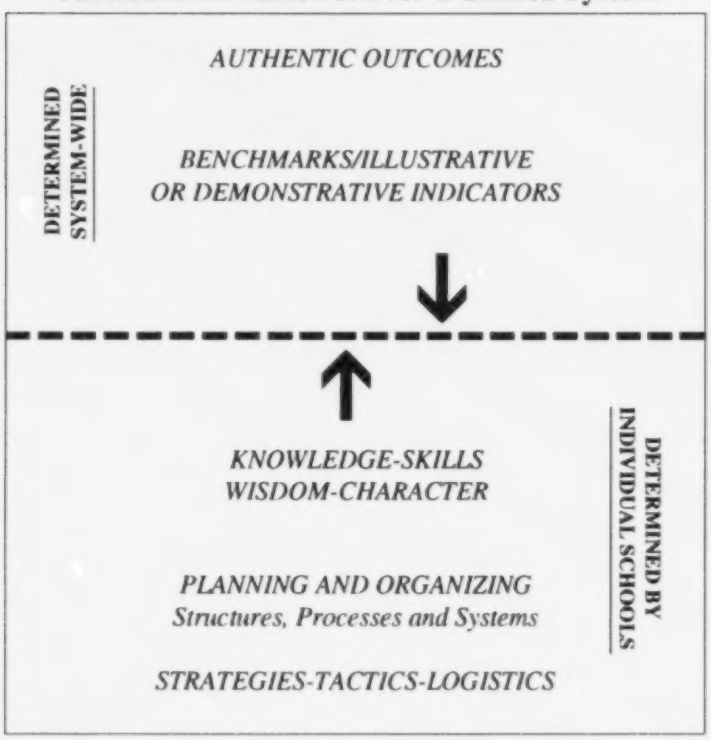
Traditionally, students have been placed in special education classrooms under the assumption that specialized materials and instructional strategies provided to students in a separate setting have significant impact on student learning. Unfortunately, "there is no compelling body of evidence that segregated special education programs have significant benefits for students" (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987, p. 375). Even the opponents of the Regular Education Initiative note that special education has not led to direct instructional benefits for students with disabilities (see Skrtic, 1991a). The curriculum in special education classrooms is often based on narrowly defined goals and objectives and often has little correlation to the curriculum of the regular classroom. Besides offering a narrowed curriculum which is separate and often unequal, the lack of correlation with the regular curriculum makes it almost impossible for students to return to the mainstream with any chance of success.

The knowledge, skills, wisdom and character needed by students with disabilities to become productive adults have more commonalities than differences with their non-disabled peers. A unified curriculum

> . . . assumes a common core of knowledge that all students must have. Within a unified curricular framework, students with disabilities [as well as those without disabilities] receive instruction in the broad curricular domains but at levels commensurate with their current functioning and with instructional modifications as needed. (McLaughlin & Warren, 1992, p. 61)

In an outcome model, curriculum is defined or organized in the following way:

Figure 2:
Curriculum Framework for a Unified System



Centrally determined broad-based outcomes that can be observed or demonstrated are established for all students. Demonstrative indicators become part of the benchmarks for progress in the system accountability plan. At the individual school level, faculties determine specific knowledge, skills, wisdom and character attributes to be acquired by all students, which include what students are expected to know, think or do. Staff members are also empowered to plan and organize the structures, processes, and systems to facilitate instruction. Finally, staff members select the strategies, tactics and logistics to be used on a daily basis.

A distinctive curriculum results when relating knowledge, skills, wisdom and character to the methods outlined in the structures, processes and systems. They are observed in the form of daily tasks and activities. The actual content may be developed in integrated, thematic units which in turn may be delivered through cooperative teaching and learning activities.

Implications

A unified curriculum can only exist when unified outcomes are broadly defined. If outcomes are too narrow in focus, many children are unable to achieve them. "The primary need is for breadth and balance—meaning that the curriculum should be defined not in terms of narrow subject matter but broader areas of knowledge and skill" (McLaughlin & Warren, 1992, p. 61).

"When schools emphasize only academic performance and higher level thinking skills, teachers become less tolerant of diverse learners [and] failures increase. . . " (McLaughlin and Warren, 1992, p. 20). Instructional approaches must also be varied and flexible. There are many effective instructional strategies, some more effective with certain students than others. "If schools adopt one specific instructional approach there is a risk that the approach will not be effective for all students" (McLaughlin and Warren, 1992, p. 20). Again, failure ensues and that failure may be due to a "mismatch of instructor and student, NOT that the content was inappropriate" (McLaughlin and Warren, 1992, p. 63).

Teachers, students, administrators, parents and other significant constituents must collaborate and plan cooperatively to meet the needs of a variety of students. A shared model and language must be created between special and regular educators to allow for more effective collaboration and team teaching. A common curriculum development framework is recommended to encourage joint model building which leads to joint responsibility for all students. Time for teacher preparation must be allotted and on-going staff development and support is critical.

Create Supports for Staff Development
and Staff Renewal

Issue 8

Action Recommendation

Staff Development in a Restructured Workplace Fosters Ad Hoc Problem Solving, Shared Resources and Continuous Improvement

Rationale

A unified system and all the changes it entails succeeds only when the staff supports it. Teachers, who see many trends in education come and go, are skeptical of another change and tend to dismiss it as they go about their daily routines in their isolated classrooms. If restructuring of any kind is to be taken seriously by teachers, administrators, students or parents, adequate time and training must be provided for all stakeholders, in particular the teachers, to provide information about the changes and to prepare for them. Past experience with change has often left teachers bitter, exhausted and frustrated because they did not have a clear understanding of the changes before they occurred, they had little say in the changes, and they were not given adequate time to prepare prior to implementation. Far too often, planning time and time for collegial support is non-existent. Teachers are expected to learn as they go and adapt as they can. The result is teacher negativism and burn out.

The unification of our educational system requires teachers to change significantly. All teachers teach all children. For both types of educators, regular education teachers and those teaching students with disabilities, unification may be difficult. Special educators, especially those who have worked in isolation of the general education system, may have little knowledge of

curricular issues and standardized testing processes. Regular teachers who lack experience and skills in dealing with individual differences, managing deviant behaviors, and adapting instructional processes for students with disabilities will find unification intimidating.

Implications

When a unified system is adopted, on-going staff development is a prerequisite to its success. The staff development plan must promote and account for the aspirations of individual teachers within the vision and mission of the school. Schools must become learning organizations where growth of teachers as well as students is the norm and where this continuous, professional evolution is a priority. The outcomes of staff development must be the commitment to increase one another's capacity to serve each other as well as the welfare of children and youthin a collaborative work culture (Fullan, 1991).

A dedication to on-going staff development requires changing the use of time and money. Districts must manage and develop resources on a continuous and long-term basis. Those districts that are unwilling to take this step cannot succeed. Also, a comprehensive plan must be developed at the building level by building level people. Parents and other stakeholders must be included as co-planners in relevant developmental activities. Resources need to be available within the school as well as without. Local colleges and universities and other elements of the community might have the knowledge needed. Those people who attend workshops or conferences must return to the school and share what they have learned. Staff development must be focused on the mission of the school as well as personal need and can no longer be the "hit or miss" system that has survived through the years.

Schedules must provide time for staff development. This time can surface in many different ways, such as teaming or planning meetings, in-service presentations, individual study opportunities, parent conferencing, peer coaching, mentoring, etc. Finally, collaboration or team teaching is the best daily, on-going opportunity for staff development. "The concept of collaboration is enhanced as special and regular educators determine together their collective staff development needs and how they will design their professional experiences" (McLaughlin and Warren, 1992, p. 71).

Finally, staff development activities must be continuously evaluated to determine if they result in long term change. If changes in practice and improvement in learner outcomes are not evident, then the staff development plan must be modified.

Integrated Community Services for Students
with Disabilities and Families

Issue 9

Action Recommendation

All Students and Their Families Have Access to Integrated Community Services At or Near the School Site

Rationale

Given the socio-economic conditions and energies of most vulnerable families, reaching the needs of vulnerable students is extremely difficult. Though separate community mental health, justice, social service agencies, public health, career development, job training and supportive employment agencies have been created to provide assistance to these families, this purpose is not always achieved. Models of integrated site delivery systems are emerging as an alternative to the compartmentalized and fractionated system of delivery to students with disabilities and their families. The majority of services, however, are still available through a variety of separate agencies, all with different eligibility criteria, limited resources and staff support shortages. Some agencies overlap in the services they can provide, and sometimes, due to limited funding or changes in eligibility criteria, there are no agencies that can provide needed services alone.

In most communities today, access to and the coordination of these services are key issues. In these communities, a person may need to meet separate eligibility criteria before receiving services. If multiple agencies are involved, each agency almost always requires separate assessments before a service can be provided. These multiple assessments are often redundant, costly, and extremely

time consuming. One assessment system accepted by all agencies would streamline and expedite the process which would provide initial access to services in a faster, more efficient manner.

Once a student or family becomes eligible for agency services the next hurdle may be location. Services should be provided in convenient, common places. Many families are without transportation or feel intimidated by leaving their immediate neighborhood. By providing all services in a common and familiar area, students and families are more likely to keep appointments and receive consistent treatment. A single point of entry is crucial. The school, itself, may be the best option.

Interagency coordination is essential, particularly in a unified system. In many cases, student success is directly linked to receiving such services. If these services are sporadic or non-existent, students may not be able to benefit from educational services. An integrated approach to providing agency services could ultimately solve these problems.

Implications

School personnel could play a vital role in the coordination of community services by organizing the discussions around integration and coordination. Coordination and collaboration between all service providers could decrease spending, maximize the use of staff, minimize the amount of paper work involved, and insure that all children and families who need assistance are receiving it. By providing all community services at or near the school site, the issues of access and coordination could be resolved. Schools may need to enter into negotiations for joint facility development and program operation. A single plan should be developed involving all care givers and an agreement should be reached on the process for service delivery. This process must be consistent with local needs. Schools must make every effort to become full-service schools where all agencies are represented and easily accessible.

State policies must also be developed that would assist interagency collaboration and coordination from pre-school through adult work and independent living transitional periods. These policies can guide and support agencies as they unite.

Educational Technology

Issue 10

Action Recommendation

All Students and Staff Have Access to and Training in Appropriate Technology that Supports Collaborative Decision Making

Rationale

Educational technology is a significant tool in the restructuring of educational decision-making within an outcomes based educational program. Current technological advances greatly enhance teaching and learning. Computer assisted instruction and learning, adaptive and assistive devices, and technology that manages information systems and student programs have become resources for schools.

With the ever-increasing technology, new opportunities open up to those who, in the past, may have been considered non-communicative, unable to learn, or inappropriate for school. As more students with multiple disabilities continue to arrive at the schoolhouse door, the need for assistive devices increases. Also, with this ever-increasing technology comes the opportunity for easier managment of individual programs and greater access to information.

Of great importance is the potential of interactive technologies as a means of inclusion and student participation in the life of the school. As part of restructured schools, teams of teachers serving all students need to communicate and network while sharing their ideas and resources for serving students who are increasingly diverse and vulnerable. Staff members need a means to record and share their observations of student performance and also need a way to tie their observations to valued student outcomes. In addition, networking teacher

expertise through technology is a quick and efficient means to get new ideas to problem solving teams at the point of delivery. Finally, a data base founded on student outcomes is the repository for student and program evaluation in the accountability system for schools and the school district. The data base can also serve as the tool for continuous school improvement.

Implications

Technology, however useful, is only an effective tool when people are adequately trained to use it. Training in the use of evolving technologies is more significant than the investment made in the technology itself. Both teachers and students need to be knowledgeable about the technology they are using. Some computers sit idle in classrooms because teachers have had no training in computer use and are intimidated by new technology. Students often miss out on valuable information or experiences, because they have not had adequate training with the technology on which they are dependent. For these reasons, equal access to technology, as well as adequate on-going training, is essential for both students and teachers.

The increasing use of technology and information networks can improve the capacity of school systems to treat all students as individuals. Maintaining an awareness of developing technology and its use with all students is a new and on-going task of district leadership and instructional personnel. Easy access to information regarding specific disabilities can assist in the development of individual education plans. Assistive technology in the hands of students allows them to be educated more appropriately and increases their potential for social interaction with their peers.

Technology can be used to unite students placed in more restrictive environments with their age appropriate peers. Homebound students or those in more restrictive settings can continue to be participating members of the classroom through the use of technology. Though this technology could link a student to his/her classroom, caution in using this to justify exclusion from a classroom needs to be exercised.

Schools will also need to explore funding options for providing technological assistance. What technology is educationally relevant? What assistive devices should be provided by the school or parent? Who pays? Who has ownership of the devices? Who is liable? Funds must also be allocated for training in the use of technology prior to its purchase. State lease and lending programs can be required to offset large cost items.

Another issue involves the physical plant. Can it support the technology to be used? Can it be safely stored? How is it transported? Finally, a plan for continually updating technology must be in place as well as a plan for removing the obsolete. Easy access to assistance in the use of new equipment is mandatory.

Summary: What's Next?

The CASE Future Agenda for Special Education represents a continuing evolution in philosophy regarding the way services for students with disabilities should be provided. The recommended policies and actions are a result of numerous debates and often painful deliberations regarding the educational future of these students. Special educators can be proud of all that has been accomplished in the last four decades. The dedication, persistence and continual belief in the learning capacity of students can provide inspiration to all educators who now face the challenges of providing an education to increasingly diverse student populations.

The dual system of special and regular education served a valuable purpose. Public education is recognizing its responsibility to students with disabilities, and the institutional realities are changing. In the last twenty years, expectations have changed for students with disabilities and for special education as a practice. Keeping students with disabilities isolated and protected is no longer a primary goal. The time has come for this dual system to merge into one educational system which can allow students with disabilities to be integrated and accepted as valuable members of our schools and eventually our communities. Learning to live with students with disabilities in the school is a precursor to students as adults embracing others in the community.

There is risk involved in a merger of this magnitude. We are dealing with students' lives. A unified educational system depends on developing new relationships built on trust—trust that all stakeholders are willing to surrender their past agendas and work together for the sake of all students. The face of education must change and a new system must emerge which accepts its responsibility for the education of all students who live in the community it serves. The restructuring movement throughout the United States and Canada is a key means to making this vision a reality.

What comes next? It is the intent of CASE through its Executive Committee to begin advocating for its Future Agenda in its policy and legislative activity at the national, provincial and state level. The Executive Committee will also begin to share the Future Agenda with other public and private associations who have interest in the education of students with disabilities. Currently, the Executive Committee is exploring workshops with other professional leadership associations and other means to help disseminate the Future Agenda to audiences of educators and community members.

At the local level, CASE has committed to supporting a process for local school communities to study and plan for the future. It is our intent through national, regional, provincial and state level meetings to share the Future Agenda with local level leadership in the United States and Canada. CASE has pilot tested a local policy development and planning process. CASE recommends the formation of a community wide committee composed of school board members, teachers, principals, related service personnel, parents, and other community agency and employer representatives to discuss the policy options that would lead to a new local agenda. It is our belief that the local review process is critical for gaining support for new policies that will direct the future of services for students with disabilities.

In closing, we would like to thank those individuals and groups who have assisted CASE throughout this process. Their input has been critical in formulating the CASE Future Agenda for Special Education: Creating a Unified System of Education.

We look forward to your comments and suggestions.

Jack Freehill
President, CASE, Inc.

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The University of Maryland and the CASE Research Committee have developed four documents which will assist educators in developing policies for their districts.

The first two papers, Issues and Options in Restructuring Schools and Special Education and CASE Research Issues and Policy Options, describe current special education issues such as Developing a Clear Vision, Organizational Restructuring, Curriculum, Accountability Systems, Staff Development, Funding, Technology, and others. Various policy options for each issue are proposed.

The third document is a The Response Booklet which summarizes each issue and option and can be used as a "workbook" for developing specific policies for your schools.

The final document is the CASE Future Agenda Creating a Unified Education System which outlines CASE's vision for the future of education for all students.

The documents are offered as a package (set of all 4 books) for $30.00 or each document can be ordered separately for $10.00 a copy. Bulk rates are available for 25 copies or more.

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The mission of the Council of Administrators of Special Education, Inc. is to provide leadership and support to members by shaping policies and practices which impact the quality of education.

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